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FOR PM ACTING A/S LIKINS

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SUBJECT: CANADA SCENESETTER FOR POL-MIL BILATS

Classified By: POL M/C Brian Flora. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

BACKGROUND

11. (C) Your leadership of the U.S. delegation at the inaugural US-Canada political-military consultations is greatly appreciated. While the United States and Canada meet regularly in continental security and defense forums, there has been growing recognition in both governments that broader policy discussions on security goals outside the North American context would be useful. We hope that the April 27 talks will help to set a precedent for a regular bilateral dialogue on shared international security interests and concerns.

12. (C) Our discussions are taking place against the backdrop of domestic political uncertainty. The fragile Martin government has been trying to avert a loss-of-confidence vote that could propel the country to the polls less than a year after the June 2004 elections. Prime Minister Martin's overriding concern is to reverse his party's parliamentary minority and to win a majority mandate. But the Liberals continue to be battered by ugly fallout from a Chretien-era spending scandal involving Quebec. Sealed evidence from the investigation revealing illegal activity by the Liberal party was leaked to the public in early April, reviving the specter of Quebec "sovereignty" and ratcheting political tensions in Ottawa to a fever pitch.

13. (C) True to the political winds and its minority mandate, the government is not pursuing an aggressive agenda in foreign policy. At the same time, within the constraints of political scandal, limited funding, and slipping global clout, Canada continues to seek an active diplomatic agenda in multilateral institutions to address concerns such as non-proliferation, Iran, and the Middle East peace process. Low defense spending and a host of related limitations notwithstanding, the government also strives to maintain a respectable level of involvement in Afghanistan and other field missions, usually under a multilateral umbrella. Foreign policy topics of significance under the Martin government are addressed below.

U.S.-CANADA RELATIONS

14. (C/NF) Though PM Martin has made it a top priority of his government to get Canada-US relations back on track, his good intentions have been subsumed by domestic politics. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) continues to believe it was absolutely correct to walk away from controversial participation in the U.S. missile defense program. But the government has not managed to shut down its pro-defense critics at home and has been at some pains to demonstrate that Canada remains a committed U.S. partner on international defense and security matters. Though Canada had maintained a wary distance from any Iraq-related military assistance, for example, within days of the decision on missile defense, the PMO announced a contribution to the NATO Training Mission's Iraq Trust Fund of CAD 1 million (USD 800,000) and pledged military trainers (albeit not in country) for the Iraqi military.

TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

15. (C/NF) Closer to the U.S. than ever on border collaboration and continental defense, Canada no longer sees itself as a bridge between Europe and the United States, but rather seeks a special relationship with each. This is a natural evolution, as Canada finds its pocketbook linked increasingly to the U.S. (two-way trade between the EU and Canada is 10 percent of that between the U.S. and Canada), while its international values lie closer to those of Europe (Canada voted with the EU common position on 50 of 52 UNGA resolutions; the U.S. voted with the EU on 21 resolutions).

16. (C/NF) Canada's relations with the EU, which some in the francophone-dominated Foreign Affairs bureaucracy see as a diplomatic counterweight to the U.S., are evolving rapidly. Of six states designated by the EU as a strategic partner, Canada probably has the most advanced and complex relationship with Europe. At the March 2004 bi-annual Canada-EU Summit, PM Martin, EU Commission President Prodi,

and Acting EU President Ahern agreed to a Partnership Agenda, which improved cooperation on security, foreign policy, trade, and investment. Once content to manage transatlantic security relations exclusively through NATO and the OSCE, recently Canada has been negotiating terms of participation in potential EU field missions where NATO is not a player but in which Canada may have human security or other interests.

17. (C/NF) Canada regularly affirms its commitment to NATO and the OSCE as the principal anchors in the transatlantic security relationship. But an appetite for spending on social programs and aversion to military expenditure continues to dominate the budgeting priorities of the Liberals who have been in power since 1993. Defense spending as a percentage of GDP ranks Canada in the bottom third of NATO countries.

UN REFORM

18. (SBU) The centrality of multilateral institutions--the UN especially--to Canada's foreign policy cannot be overstated. In his UNGA address, PM Martin urged bold reforms to strengthen the UN's capability to conduct humanitarian intervention, to deny WMD to terrorists and hostile states, to protect human rights and dignity, and to build better public institutions in failing states. Canada has been active in the more mundane agenda of the "Group of Friends"; it has lobbied for a more open and transparent UNSC and is in favor of a modest increase in its elected--not permanent--membership. Canada's deteriorating capacity to assist with any of this agenda, however, has seriously weakened its voice in the international forum.

19. (C) At the recent G-8 Political Directors' meeting, Foreign Affairs Assistant Deputy Minister Jim Wright said that Canada supports UNSYG Annan's proposed Peace-Building Commission and the principle of "Responsibility to Protect." Though acknowledging that Canada understands the latter concept would be problematic for some, Wright said the GOC wishes to pursue it in a "practical" way.

NATION-BUILDING AND HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

10. (C) Sudan: Underscoring the Prime Minister's declared interest in alleviating the situation in Sudan, Canada pledged CAD 90 million in assistance at the Oslo Donors' Conference. The GOC also announced that up to 31 Canadian Forces (CF) personnel will be deployed to southern Sudan over the coming months as part of UNMIS. In London April 6, ADM Wright told U/S Burns that Chief of Defence Staff Hillier would visit Sudan in the second half of April to examine options for potential other contributions--possibly helicopter support or training.

11. (C) Haiti: Prime Minister Martin consistently has made the case for Canada's "special responsibility" toward Haiti, a francophone country where Canada played a major role in the 1990s. In addition to diplomatic efforts, and notwithstanding its operationally-stretched Forces, Canada contributed 500 troops to stability operations under UNSCR 1529, followed by a policing contingent of 100 RCMP officers. ADM Wright recently proposed to U/S Burns a bilateral dialogue on Haiti at a senior level.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST TERRORISM

12. (C) Afghanistan: Canada has been with us fully in Afghanistan, contributing troops (and leadership of ISAF V in 2004), money (USD 500 million through 2009), and political support consistently. Following Cabinet approval of the government's 2005-06 Afghanistan package, ADM Wright informed A/S Burns that Canada would deploy 180-250 CF personnel to the PRT in Kandahar at the end of the summer. The GOC also plans to deploy a battalion in spring 2006, at conclusion of the Canadian army's 18-month "operational pause".

13. (SBU) Iraq: Canada just as surely was not with us on Iraq, maintaining a position of non-involvement in the war while withholding overt criticism of the U.S.-led coalition. Canada did lead the maritime task force monitoring movement in the Persian Gulf, a service that began with an eye on Afghanistan but proved useful in the lead-up to the liberation of Iraq. Though the GOC pledged CAD 300 million (approx. USD 235 million) for reconstruction efforts, sent RCMP trainers to help with the Iraqi civilian police program in Jordan, and is prepared to assist with capacity building in the Iraqi government, it steadfastly declines to put "boots on the ground", even as a NATO member.

NONPROLIFERATION - IRAN

14. (SBU) Iran: Though not on the agenda for our talks, Canada shares U.S. concern over Tehran's nuclear program and has led efforts alongside the USG, UK and Australia, to reign in Tehran's nuclear ambitions via the IAEA. Canada termed its bilateral approach to Iran "controlled engagement" until the 2003 killing of a Canadian-Iranian journalist in police

custody in Tehran, when it shifted to "no engagement" in protest. A new Canadian Ambassador recently returned to Tehran, but relations remain tense.

LANDMINES

15. (C) A leading advocate of the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (also known as the "Ottawa Convention"), the government of Canada acknowledges U.S. commitment to and activism in de-mining in spite of U.S. non-accession, and we have been able to work together on humanitarian de-mining initiatives. At the same time, Ottawa was highly offended by the U.S. proposal in the CD last year for a transfer ban on "persistent" landmines because it undermined "the only multilateral disarmament agreement on landmines", which advocates a comprehensive ban.

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